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Records of Falconiformes from the Lake Rudolf area, Kenya

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Among numbers of Falconiformes collected by the Maytag-University of Miami Expedition to Kenya (1958-1959) are certain specimens which are of interest in a consideration of the East African avifauna.

Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides Temminck

Two were observed 4th November, 1958, on the east side of von Höhnel's Bay just north and inland of the oasis of Loiyangalani. On that date numerous birds of prey, obviously in migration, were evident. The two Barbary Falcons were conspicuous in their flight as they passed above the barren, rocky hillsides. The specimen collected, one of the above, was an adult female weighing 609 grams; its irides were dark brown, its cere, legs, and toes yellow. Identification of this specimen was confirmed by Dr. Charles Vaurie of the American Museum of Natural History.

The Barbary Falcon is known to range southward into the Egyptian Sudan (Sclater, 1924: 50). This specimen is apparently the first Barbary Falcon taken in Kenya.

Aquila clanga Pallas

A Greater Spotted Eagle, collected at El Molo Bay, 19th October, 1958, probably represents the southernmost point of collection of this species in Africa as well as the first specimen for Kenya. Identification of the specimen, a female in immature plumage, its remiges much worn, was made at the American Museum of Natural History by Drs. Erwin Stresemann and Charles Vaurie. Bednall (1959: 144) reported a possible sight record of the eagle for Nairobi.

The eagle was encountered at the waterline of a sandy beach. Standing quietly on the ground, its feathers much ruffled by strong wind, it did not flush upon close approach. Fish in advanced stages of digestion were in its stomach.

Circaëtus gallicus (Gmelin)

A Short-toed Harrier Eagle was collected 27th October, 1958, at Uraubuli Luggar, approximately 30 miles north of Loiyangalani. Attention to the eagle, perched atop an acacia of the fringing growth of the luggar, was directed by mobbing of it by Yellow-billed Hornbills, *Tockus flavirostris* (Rüppell) and Lesser Brown-necked Ravens, *Corvus corax edithae* Phillips. An adult female weighing 1,304 grams, its irides

were a strikingly pronounced yellow. Portions of a monitor lizard, *Varanus exanthematicus*, were in its stomach.

No other specimens of this species had been previously reported from Kenya which heretofore has been considered (Sclater, 1924: 63) somewhat south of the wintering range of this migrant from the Palaearctic.

Buteo rufinus (Cretzschmar)

6th November, 1958, during the period when migrating birds of prey were in abundance in the Rudolf area, an adult male Long-legged Buzzard, in the reddish-brown phase, was collected just north of Loiyangalani. As it stood on a ledge protruding from a steep hillside, the buzzard's plumage nicely matched the background of reddish soil. Weight of the buzzard was 1,280 grams.

This is apparently the first specimen of this species taken in Kenya, its usual range not extending this far south in Africa (Sclater, 1924: 66).

Accipiter nisus (Linnaeus)

Winter records of the European Sparrow Hawk are not common from as far south in Africa as Kenya, although the species has been reported from Tanzania (Mackworth-Praed and Grant, 1952: 110) and a specimen collected (Leakey, 1943: 116) in Kenya. The present specimen apparently constitutes the second record from Kenya and the first from the Northern Frontier Province.

Identification of this specimen, an adult female which weighed 116g. and was collected five miles south of Loiyangalani, was confirmed by Dr. Charles Vaurie, who designated it *Accipiter n. nisus* (Linnaeus).

Specimens cited above are part of the ornithological collections of the Department of Biology of the University of Miami.

Considering that few observations have been made of birds in the Rudolf area over a protracted period, it is not surprising that species were encountered which have been unreported for the Kenya avifauna. Additional distributional records may be awaited from the area, in particular those of Falconiformes and of other diurnal migrants which from an aerodynamic point of view would seem to find about the lake favourable conditions of passage. The terrain about Rudolf, mostly semi-desert, is an uneven one with precipitous hills and mountains and often rugged shorelines. Thermals are ubiquitous and the strong winds of the Rift Valley produce obstruction currents utilized, along with the thermals, by many birds on migration. Lake Rudolf itself is an important source of prey for many falconiform birds. Its shallows teem with fish which furnish food for obligate piscivores. The 150 mile long lake attracts numbers of waterbirds, especially Charadriiformes, to its sheltered bays; many hawks exploit these populations with ease. Orthopterans, lizards, and ground squirrels of the semi-desert furnish prey to additional species.

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